United Nations A/69/806

General Assembly

Distr.: General
5 March 2015

Original: English

Sixty-ninth session
Agenda item 68
Promotion and protection of human rights

Letter dated 2 March 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to convey to you information on increasing the political and legal culture of the population of Uzbekistan (see annex).

I would appreciate it if you could circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 68.

(*Signed*) Muzaffar **Madrakhimov**

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Annex to the letter dated 2 March 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

Increasing the political and legal culture of the population of Uzbekistan

A well-developed legal culture is a crucial prerequisite for building a democratic State of law and an open civil society. Promoting and achieving a high level of legal awareness among the members of society instils respect for the principles of lawfulness, the equality of all before the law, the protection of human rights and interests, and the efficacy of the law.

In Uzbekistan, the primary tasks involved in achieving legal literacy and a high level of legal awareness have been defined, with the aim of establishing a comprehensive, permanent system for the development of a legal culture. These tasks include improving the system of legal training and education; instilling respect for the law and rights in all government agencies, officials and citizens; improving the public's legal literacy; and enabling citizen engagement in social and legal affairs.

Uzbekistan is developing legal mechanisms geared towards achieving a high level of legal culture nationwide, with the active participation of government agencies, educational institutions, national human rights centres and civil society institutions.

The relevant legal framework has been established, comprising a national programme to raise citizens' understanding of the law, a national professional training programme, laws on education and safeguards for the rights of the child, and other regulations.

A major focus of the system of legal education is to foster a law-abiding and well-rounded young generation. Institutional measures are being implemented to familiarize the public with the Uzbek Constitution and inculcate legal awareness in young people and promote their reflection on and understanding of the law. Specifically, requirements for the relevant curricula have been developed; a set of training courses on the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan has been approved; and age-appropriate textbooks and specialized materials for all educational levels are being published. In addition, instructors for these courses have been trained.

Moreover, institutional measures to improve the training and professional development of professionals in the field of the law are gradually being refined. A particular focus is providing retraining and continuing education for educators in the field, and supplying them with instructional and training materials that meet current requirements and standards.

The current system of basic and advanced training for legal personnel is comprised of the Tashkent State University of Law; the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs; the law faculties of institutions of higher education; specialized colleges; the Centre for Advanced Training of Lawyers under the Ministry of

Justice; and advanced courses offered by the Office of the Procurator-General. Producing trained legal personnel with the knowledge required in today's world is one of the aims of judicial reform, which will ensure the protection of citizens' rights and legal interests.

In order to make activities in this area more consistent and effective, a mechanism has been established to coordinate legal outreach and instruction by government agencies and community organizations. The work of the Ministry of Justice has thus been improved since the establishment, in 2012, of the Inter-Agency Council for the Coordination of Legal Outreach and Instruction by Government Agencies.

The adoption of the policy outline on the extension of democratic reform and the promotion of civil society, proposed by President Islam Karimov at a joint session of parliament in 2012, marked an important phase of development in this area. The policy outline notes the need for a targeted comprehensive programme of measures designed to radically improve legal education and instruction in Uzbekistan. To that end, an amended version of the national programme to improve citizens' legal culture has been drafted. The drafting process took into account lessons learned in developed democracies that have experience in implementing various programmes to improve the public's knowledge of the law at the local level.

Along with educational institutions and government and law enforcement agencies, civil society institutions also play an important role in improving the legal culture of Uzbeks. There are currently in Uzbekistan a number of sizeable community organizations with extensive networks of local offices throughout the country that are engaged in targeted efforts to improve the legal culture of specific groups (such as young people, women, entrepreneurs, workers, and leaders and activists from non-governmental organizations). These include such organizations as the Council of the Federation of Trade Unions, the Federation of Consumer Protection Organizations, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Kamolot youth movement, the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan, the National Association of Non-Governmental Organizations and the Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan.

The purpose of civil society institutions is to make more effective use of various forms of legal education and training; to make a significant contribution to building the social and legal engagement of citizens; and to instil in the younger generation strong convictions and views on life, with respect for national and universal values.

Youth organizations, actively involved in raising people's understanding of the law from an early age, have a special role to play here. One of the main aims of national policy on the rights of the child is to inculcate in children a sense of patriotism, citizenship, tolerance and love of peace, and to cultivate their awareness and understanding of the law.

As part of their outreach and communications activities with various demographic groups, the local and regional offices of the four political parties are also working to improve the legal culture of the public.

The mass media are actively involved in addressing questions of legal education, improving the legal culture of Uzbeks and informing them about significant social and political events in Uzbekistan and around the world. There are five specialized journals and some 40 newspapers with readerships numbering in the

thousands that focus on rights and advocacy issues. Helping the public to become familiar with existing legislation is one of the primary activities of advisory centres established by civic self-government bodies.

Civil society institutions also work with government institutions, including law enforcement agencies, to improve the political and legal culture of the public. The primary aims of such cooperation are to increase people's familiarity with legal issues, encourage their engagement in social and labour issues, and broaden their knowledge of labour legislation and entrepreneurship, as well as to prevent crime.

Non-governmental organizations and national human rights institutions are working to inform the public about international law, provide instruction for the public on the protection of human rights, and carrying out national plans of action to implement the recommendations of United Nations treaty bodies, all of which is creating conditions conducive to further improvement of Uzbeks' legal culture.

Sociological research on legal culture, public opinion of the law and citizens' familiarity with legal issues is currently a key method for determining the actual state of awareness of the law in society as a whole and understanding of the law among various demographic groups. Several sociological studies were conducted in 2014 to determine the level of legal awareness and understanding among particular demographic groups: students, entrepreneurs and civil society activists.

The research results indicate increased understanding of the law and politics and increased civic awareness and social engagement. Of the 816 young people who responded, 95 per cent indicated that "the law must always be obeyed" and 87 per cent were aware of their constitutional rights and obligations. Moreover, 85 per cent of young people believe that if their rights are violated, justice can be done and their rights restored, while 57 per cent stated that they turn to law enforcement agencies for protection of their rights and legal interests.

Current practice in Uzbekistan shows that a system for cultivating citizens' legal awareness and legal culture has been established and is evolving. This system includes training on the law for the younger generation, continuing education of legal professionals and a mechanism for coordinating the activities of government bodies.